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on the
Resolution on Iraq
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So much of what we do in this chamber is inconsequential, but the subject of this debate is anything but trivial. Let us then be as serious as life and death are serious. The capacity to reproduce that fearful mushroom cloud which first terrorized the world in 1945 is multiplying and becoming the deadly plaything of rogue nations across the globe.

Partisans have charged the President with “misleading us into war,” “misleading” here being a pale euphemism for lying. The accusation is made more grave by the assertion that he concocted the war for purely political purposes. By any measure, this is a monstrous charge.

But questions persist which must be answered. If we are to honestly examine the President’s rationale for this intervention, it is essential to first understand the context in which the decision was made.

President Bush has cited two factors for his decision to intervene in Iraq: the first, his belief that Saddam was reconstituting his arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, and the second, that the Iraqi dictator was cooperating with al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.

The threat from Saddam Hussein stretches back much further than many of today’s critics care to remember. Saddam’s efforts to develop a nuclear weapon began in the 1970s, centered around the nuclear reactor being constructed at Osirak.

Despite the alarming evidence of its purpose, the world casually contemplated what it saw as a distant, perhaps even benign, development. But the luxury of inaction was not available to Israel, because her leaders knew that their country was certain to be among Saddam’s first targets. They also knew that the responsibility for Israel’s safety was theirs alone, and that the world would do nothing to save their country if they failed to act.

So act they did, launching a bold attack in 1981, destroying the reactor complex, and setting Hussein’s nuclear quest back many years. But far from praising this heroic act that benefited humanity, the world community responded with condemnation, even outrage. Yet, in hindsight, is anyone so foolish as to assert that Israel should have waited for the United Nations to confirm that a threat existed, that Israel should not have taken action to destroy the reactor, even in defiance of the

international community? Had Israel not acted, the future of the Middle East and the West would likely have unfolded quite differently, and far more tragically.

Unchastened by this setback, Saddam continued his aggressive campaign to dominate the region and control the world's oil supply, launching a decade-long war against Iran in 1980 during which over a million people were killed and in which he used poison gas and other means of mass slaughter. After being beaten back from Iran, his attention then turned to Kuwait, which he invaded and annexed in 1990, assuming that the world would meekly accept this *fait accompli*.

Many forget that, for a time, that outcome was a real possibility. Much of the initial response in the world community and in this country was one of "look the other way" and "hope for the best."

Only when the United States decided to forcefully eject Saddam from Kuwait and to assume the principal burden for doing so, was the international community finally persuaded to go along. We refused to allow our fate and that of the world to be shaped by a dictator, and all sensible people are glad of it.

What we providentially discovered after that war astonished the entire world. Despite years of inspections and the best efforts of numerous intelligence services, Saddam had managed to secretly construct a massive program to develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. The experts estimate that he was only six months from an operational nuclear device. Had he postponed his invasion of Kuwait by half a year, the world would now be a much darker place.

This record of unrelenting aggression and implacable menace was the only context in which a reasonable person could view Saddam's future designs. This was the background in which the events of 9/11 occurred.

Imagine yourself as President, confronting the fact that an unknown group of terrorists has incinerated 3000 Americans in an attack carried out by individuals who gladly committed suicide to create this horror. We had no idea how extensive their resources were, how global the threat was, who were their allies, how massive were the hidden terrors to come.

In this context, let us consider the alternative to our intervention in Iraq: The President is presented with evidence that, once again, Saddam Hussein is developing weapons of mass destruction, that he is once again refusing to cooperate with international arms inspectors, that he has had contact with al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, that he is even harboring terrorist organizations. And yet the President decides not to act. He decides to wait, to see if those same inspectors who had previously been deceived by Saddam will once again give him a clean bill of health months or years in the future, to wait until our allies or the United Nations grudgingly grant us

a narrow warrant to act. To wait until Saddam perhaps gives to some terrorist organization a nuclear, chemical, or biological weapon to detonate in some U.S. city. To trust our fate to those who would destroy us is to die and leave no descendents.

Is it possible to imagine the storm of condemnation that would justifiably fall on a president who, by not acting, allowed Saddam to arm himself once again with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons? To allow the possibility that these might be made available to a terrorist organization? To acquiesce in the death of thousands, of tens of thousands, perhaps of millions, of Americans simply because the available evidence wasn't 99 percent – no, 100 percent – certain? For if al-Qaeda had had a nuclear device, there can be no doubt that it would have used it on 9/11, and we would be mourning the death of 3 million Americans, not a tragic 3,000.

Which, then, was the greater risk in the face of decades of evidence? To act or not to act? To trust Saddam? Who in this body is willing to assert that it is ever wise, that it is ever moral, to risk the destruction of the American people?

That is the context in which the decision to intervene in Iraq was taken. Was our intelligence imperfect? In retrospect, that is obvious. But when is it ever perfect? Nor was this shortcoming uniquely ours. Every intelligence service in the world assumed that Saddam was once again engaged in developing WMDs. After the invasion, we learned the astonishing fact that even Saddam's own generals believed that he possessed them and was prepared to use them.

It is certainly worth noting that, among the shrillest voices condemning our intelligence failure, are many who once devoted their efforts to weakening our intelligence capabilities, who employed their energies toward imposing restrictions, cutting budgets, sounding alarms about imaginary "rogue elephants." Permit me to quote from some of the most strident critics of this Administration and its campaign against the terrorists:

John Kerry: On September 23, 2001, 12 days after the events of 9/11, Senator Kerry stated that "the tragedy is, at this moment, that the single most important weapon for the United States of America is intelligence...we are weakest, frankly, in that particular area. So it's going to take us time to be able to build up here to do this properly." CBS' *Face the Nation*, September 23, 2001.

But in 1995, Kerry introduced a bill (S. 1290) that would have reduced the Intelligence budget by \$300 million in each of the fiscal years 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000.

Maxine Waters: In 1998, Maxine Waters stated that, "it is time to totally eliminate the CIA." *Congressional Record*, March 18, 1997.

On several occasions in the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet empire, a majority of Democrats in the House voted to cut the U.S. Intelligence budget. Yet following the horrific events of 9/11, the chorus of voices that had previously advocated reducing our Intelligence capabilities quickly reversed their theme. Even they must thank God that they had been unsuccessful in their efforts. But, on this subject, we hear nothing but deafening silence.

One inescapable lesson of history is that passivity in the face of a threat is an invitation to strike. The desire to run away only encourages pursuit. We are seeing that fatal approach gather strength elsewhere in the world, manifested in efforts to bind the hands of those who would attack terrorism at its source. The hope is that, as with the passing of a storm, the threat will move on and blue skies reappear. And that the nightmare will, at last, be over. But the terrible reality is that, by succumbing to the fear of terrorism, by doing too little in the fear that we are doing too much, we condemn ourselves to a future of unending assaults.

Other countries have learned that, however meager their contribution to their own and the world's security, however ineffectual their actions, in the end, the United States will rescue them, will make the world right again, will defend against all threats. We, however, no longer have that luxury. If we do not take action to defend ourselves, then we are lost. Because there is no one to rescue us if we fail.

So, aware of his responsibilities, aware of the horrific consequences that might occur from indecision and a reliance on trust and hope, President Bush acted to remove the threat posed by Saddam. What he did is called "leadership." And for doing his duty for all of us, he has been denounced by many of the same people who would have denounced him had he not acted, denounced by people who bear no responsibility, who take no responsibility, even for their own actions.

Saddam is no longer a threat to anyone. That is a salutary lesson for those around the world who watch and wait for opportunities for unopposed aggression. They now know that their invulnerability has vanished.

Even more important, and almost entirely unnoticed amid the torrent of criticism focused on President Bush, is that his actions have greatly enhanced the credibility of the United States. For the next time this or any president warns a foreign despot to cease actions we believe are threatening to us, there can be little doubt that we will take decisive and forceful action, no matter how great the opposition of the world community.

No one can credibly question that this greatly enhanced credibility paid off with Libya's decision to abandon its efforts to acquire WMDs. Qaddafi understood what President Bush's critics

still refuse to acknowledge: that this Administration is determined to eliminate threats to our country, both actual and potential, and, if necessary, will use force to do so.

This is in sharp contrast to the passivity of the previous Administration, whose failure to react to the repeated attacks on the United States only encouraged our enemies to make further attacks. What other conclusion could al-Qaeda and others have reached from our baffling inaction in response to their assaults on our embassies, on our military, on us? They were taught the false lesson that they were free to slaughter us, and that we would do nothing.

Incredibly, senior officials from that Administration now shamelessly criticize this President for taking decisive measures to address the threat that they themselves could not be brought to contemplate. By acting first in Afghanistan, and then Iraq to remove Saddam, President Bush has rendered the need for future interventions less likely.

It is unfortunate that the quest for political advantage and a high-decibel partisanship have intruded into the national discussion of how best to address the problems we face in Iraq. But there can be no doubt that the more we appear disunited and the more voluble our descent into weakness, dissension, and inaction, the greater the aid and comfort we will give to our enemies.

The world of predictability and relative safety we once knew is gone. We are now engaged in a cruel, brutal struggle with those who would destroy us, one unprecedented in its challenge to our perseverance and courage, one that will be fought not just in foreign lands but on our own soil.

To insist that decisions must await perfect intelligence, that the risk of action is to be more feared than the risk of inaction, that others will save us, is to guarantee our defeat. But defeat in this new and far more dangerous world means annihilation. The smoking gun that some critics insist on might well be some of our cities.

We in this chamber, our country, the entire world, owe this President not condemnation but our thanks for acting in Iraq, for refusing to wait for an avowed enemy to strike, for not temporizing and letting the forces of destruction wage unopposed their pitiless war to destroy everything we believe in.

To those faint of heart from temporary setbacks in Iraq or who seek to benefit politically from our difficulties there, let me quote from Tom Paine:

“These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we

esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value.”

Charles de Gaulle once said, “France would not be true to herself if she weren’t engaged in some great enterprise.” Our great enterprise is the defense of freedom -- may we be worthy of the challenge.